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Mediæval Europe, 814-1300. By EPHRAIM EMERTON, Ph.D.
Boston, Ginn & Co., 1894. — xxv, 607 pp.

"The present volume," writes Professor Emerton, "owes its origin to repeated requests, coming from widely scattered and widely different sources, that I would go on with the history of continental Europe from the point where it was left at the close of a little book published in the year 1888." Like the earlier work, the *Introduction to the Middle Ages*, this is intended for the use of college students in the earlier classes. Thus from the beginning it should be clearly understood that Professor Emerton does not claim that his work is the result of original investigation. It is in fact midway between what the French call *un livre de vulgarisation* and the ordinary college text-book. The period covered by it extends from the death of Charlemagne to approximately the end of the thirteenth century.

The characteristic that gives unity to this period, Professor Emerton finds in the "absorption of the individual into the corporation." He maintains that the individual in this period is merged in the corporation—that he sinks "his own personality in some form of corporate life." That there is some truth in this contention cannot be denied; but the point of view seems to me to be narrow and even unscientific. A period should not be characterized by a lesser movement which is merely the concomitant reaction against a greater. The ancient state allowed no scope to the individual. The conception of a conflict between state and individual was wholly foreign to the ancient mind. The result of the Teutonic tidal wave was the total subversion of this state of affairs. As Laurent says: "Dans les républiques de l'antiquité . . . la véritable liberté n'existait pas, parce que les droits individuels étaient sacrifiés au pouvoir de la société. . . . Les Germains apportèrent dans le monde le principe de l'individualité méconnu par les anciens." From the "too much government" of ancient times the scene shifts to "the too little government" of feudal times.

The characteristic of a society organized on the feudal system was total decentralization—in fact, anarchy. As civilization advanced and as commerce sprang up, some means had to be devised to check the license of the individual. The church found an instrument in the *pax et treuga Dei*. The burghers organized themselves in the guilds, in the strong municipalities, and in Spain in the *Hermandads*, to withstand the plundering of the baron. Thus the period treated

by Professor Emerton is characterized by the extreme individualism of feudal society, and by concomitant attempts through union to put a stop to the evils resulting from such a social organization. What the king was powerless to do, the church and the burghers attempted. The rise of the centralized absolute monarchies does away with the necessity of such attempts, and the mediæval corporations, both municipal and commercial, lose their vitality in losing their *raison d'être*.

The book is not what the title and preface indicate—a history of continental Europe during the period marked out. On close examination it is found to be a history of the relations of Italy and Germany, with an appendix consisting of the last six chapters, which treat of “The Crusades,” “The Growth of the French Monarchy,” “The Intellectual Life,” “The Feudal Institutions,” “The Organization of the Middle and Lower Classes” and “The Ecclesiastical System.” Thus the work is not organic; it has no unity, and from the literary standpoint it is decidedly unsymmetrical. In this respect it furnishes a marked contrast to Professor G. B. Adams’s work.

The account of the relations of Italy and Germany during the middle ages, written in a clear but occasionally colloquial style is, so far as I have seen, the best and most useful work in English on the subject. It is not so philosophical as Bryce, but is much more complete, and for the average student far more satisfactory. It embodies the best results of German investigation, and is withal fresh and animated. As a text-book, as a readable book for the layman, and even as a work of reference for the scholar, this part, and it is by far the major part of the book, deserves high praise.

As to the chapters that have been called the appendix, the author’s dependence on secondary authorities has been so immediate as to relieve the reviewer from the necessity of further comment. Thus the chapter on “Feudal Institutions” is mainly a condensation from Luchaire’s *Manuel des Institutions Françaises*; and there is an obvious indebtedness to the same work in the chapters on the French monarchy and on the organization of the middle and lower classes. While Professor Emerton’s plan excludes the detailed citation of authorities in cases like this, the bibliography with which each chapter is introduced affords every convenience to the reader for verifying the statements of the text, and for pursuing further the study of the topics treated.

GEORGE LOUIS BEER.